

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

SAGE Waiver

Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

What is SAGE?

The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program was created to ensure improved student achievement through the implementation of four school improvement strategies:

- reducing class sizes to no more than 15:1 in grades K-3;
- extending learning opportunities and increasing collaboration between schools and their communities by extending school hours;
- implementing a rigorous curriculum focused on academic achievement; and
- improving professional development.

What is the purpose of the SAGE waiver?

- Provide Wisconsin school districts and SAGE schools limited flexibility and time to work toward compliance with current SAGE law including the class size requirement, s.118.43(1)(a), *Wis. Stats.*
- Provide Wisconsin school districts and SAGE schools support in implementing best practices regarding the SAGE Program.

Who should apply for a SAGE waiver?

If your district is not in compliance with the SAGE class size requirement, your district must submit a SAGE waiver request to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This includes schools that reduce class sizes in core subject areas only (reading/language arts and mathematics).

How does a district request a SAGE waiver?

To request a SAGE waiver, a district must receive approval from its board of education to submit a waiver to the DPI. In addition, a public hearing discussing the need for and the details of the waiver must be held to ensure community and parent input. The public hearing can be held in conjunction with a district's regularly scheduled school board meeting. Following this, the school district may submit a SAGE waiver request to the DPI. The request must include:

- A letter from the District Administrator explaining the rationale for the waiver request. The request should include factors that make it difficult for the district to meet SAGE requirements and the actions the district has taken to remedy the situation before requesting a waiver.
- Documentation that the board of education approved the waiver request to DPI. This should include the board of education meeting agenda and minutes noting approval to submit a SAGE waiver to the DPI.
- Documentation that a public hearing was held. This should include a notice of public hearing, meeting minutes/agenda, and materials distributed to the public concerning the impact of the waiver request.

When requesting a waiver for exceeding the 15:1 class size requirement:

- **Each school** requesting a waiver must include a description of the current class sizes **in each classroom, K-3**, as well as a projection of the class sizes in each K-3 classroom for the upcoming school year. A sample template for providing this information is located at http://dpi.wi.gov/sage/doc/waiver_template.doc.
- When providing class size information, teacher allocations must be at least full time (1.0) or half time (.50) in each classroom. Staffing numbers should not include portions of staff that work with students for one or two hours a day or a few hours a week, such as Title I teachers. Paraprofessionals are not considered teachers and should not be counted when documenting class size.

- Include a description of the strategies the district will use to work towards meeting the 15:1 class size requirement such as hiring additional staff and multi-age classrooms.

Is there a deadline when applying for a SAGE waiver?

It is within a district's best interest to submit a waiver request to the DPI no later than February 1 of the current school year. Timely receipt of a waiver request will allow a district ample time to carry out any long-range planning needed to work toward compliance. Waiver requests received after this timeline may not be considered for the school year they are submitted.

How long is a waiver granted?

Wis. Stats., s.118.38, states a waiver can be granted for four years; however, the DPI may impose specific conditions that must be met within the four-year waiver timeframe.

What factors does the DPI consider when granting a SAGE waiver?

Each waiver is considered on a case-by-case basis. The DPI considers a variety of factors when granting SAGE waivers including, but not limited to:

- Individual school's poverty rate.
- Student achievement trends on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam in reading and math.
- The specific grade levels that are not meeting the class size requirement.
- District's long-range plan to ensure compliance within the four-year waiver timeframe.
- District's expenditures, including any SAGE aid carryover.
- Special circumstances: classroom space, fiscal, etc.

How does DPI monitor if a waiver is being properly implemented?

DPI uses a variety of methods to ensure compliance with the waiver, including but not limited to:

- Schools' PI-SAGE-ENT Aid Claim Form.
- Schools' SAGE End-of-Year Report.
- Districts' independent audit process.
- Onsite visits.

Where should the waiver request be sent?

Please forward the SAGE waiver request and other required documentation to:
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Office of the State Superintendent
125 South Webster Street
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Who should be contacted if more assistance is needed to complete the SAGE waiver application?

- Chelssee De Barra at (608) 266-2489 or chelssee.debarra@dpi.wi.gov
- Sandy Ryan at (608) 266-7283 or sandra.ryan@dpi.wi.gov